

Dan Silverman: Good day listening public. Today is September 11th, 2019, and this is the third ever episode of The SAN Podcast alongside my colleague and co-host, Cheryl Dowd, I'm Dan Silverman. Cheryl, do you read me?

Cheryl Dowd: Yes. Good to be here again this time.

Dan Silverman: All right, and we are lucky today to be joined by none other than Dave Dannenberg. Dave is on the WCT steering committee. He is a frequent contributor to SAN. He was on the negotiated rulemaking and he is also an administrator and professor at University of Alaska Anchorage. Dave, are you here?

Dave Dannenberg: I am here. I'm happy to be here at that.

Dan Silverman: Oh, that's great. That's great. Dave, let's start broad and then we'll get a little more specific with you. You're a talented, educated human. Why did you choose to do this? Why do you do the state authorization work, this administrative work, however you want to think about it. Why, why do you do this?

Dave Dannenberg: I just thought of a question I should have asked you before we started in terms of how much editing you do post-production?

Dan Silverman: Zero.

Dave Dannenberg: Yeah, that might change my answer. So why do I do this? I do this because in all practical sense, there was no one else within the institution that would take it on. But that said, it doesn't mean I was the low man on the totem pole. I had said for years that state authorization fit in naturally with what the rest of my office does in supporting online and distance education efforts for our university. And had made the argument previously to us joining Sarah that my office was the appropriate one to be responsible for it. It took a little while for our administrations to agree with me and finally in the Fall of, what was it, 2017, I finally had convinced them that if they were really serious about distance education and moving some of our programs to a broader audience, that they needed to ramp up their state authorization oversight and again, volunteered to do it. And at that point they finally said, "Okay."

Dan Silverman: Did you ever-

Dave Dannenberg: I'm just a glutton for punishment?

Dan Silverman: Well, that was ...

Dave Dannenberg: Something that has to get done and since no one else within the institution was willing to do it, I just said, "Okay, I will take care of it myself."

Dan Silverman: Yeah, that, that was kind of my question. Was there a time that you kind of thought, "Eh, never mind, you know, other people have said, no, I'll say no too or I've done too much."

Dave Dannenberg: No, I never, just because I think it, even though it is so much broader than just online distance education efforts, I find that's how a lot of institutions choose to see it and not think about the other types of activities outside their borders that may fall into that. So to me it seemed like a natural fit and something I was, I don't know how I would say if I was interested in it, but I realized it was a responsibility that our office needed to have. So, it wasn't ever something I ran away from.

Dan Silverman: Now to give our listeners a sense of who you are, let's say higher education was outlawed, what would you do instead?

Dave Dannenberg: What would I do instead? I don't know, go into hiding, going to the run? I would be like a guerrilla educator that you would hear whispers about and would lead revolutions? You know, I never set out to go into education. Originally, I was actually going to be a park ranger. I decided when I was 13 that I wanted to either work in the backcountry of Yellowstone or in a fire lookout tower or something. And so, my undergraduate and my master's work is all in parks, recreation, and tourism management and that was the path I was pursuing until I kind of fell into the education thing. So, if education was outlawed I would probably fall back to that. I think it's a little too late for me to try to get into a career as a professional video gamer. I think I'm too old and my reflexes are two off at this point to be competitive. But you know, maybe when I was younger that could've been another pursuit.

Dan Silverman: Those are both excellent plans. It's funny you mentioned park ranger. My aunt used to give me a really hard time growing up. What are you going to do when you grow up? And, one time I said park ranger just because it was the first thing came to my head and just kind of get her off my back and she couldn't tell if I was joking. I couldn't tell if I was joking. But it kind of worked. But I think there's a certain appeal for non-desk jobs. At least I feel that way sometimes.

Dave Dannenberg: Yeah. No, growing up I was fortunate I guess that my mom would take me camping and we'd go fishing and do stuff. So, it was just a natural part of who I was and what I decided I wanted to do. I think I've been able to, I've been fortunate enough to pursue sort of that side of me even though it wasn't as a park ranger. Before coming to UAA I worked for The Nature Conservancy developing training and doing support stuff. So you know, I still had sort of that, those environmental roots for the longest time.

Dave Dannenberg: But I've also said like if I was, I hadn't thought about it in the context of higher education was outlawed, but I've always said, depending on what were to happen here in Alaska with higher education, given our current political climate, that my fallback career would be real estate just because I kind of think that

would be something fun to do. Strangely enough, no one ever believes me, I don't really enjoy talking to people all that much and meeting new people, but I really love research. So, my wife and I had this plan that I could do the back end and find homes and price homes and come up with things that people needed to see. And then, she would be like the face of the company and go out and be the realtor that shows everything to people. I guess there's another possibility too.

Dan Silverman: That's all interesting.

Cheryl Dowd: I'm impressed.

Dave Dannenberg: You never know. At one point I wanted to write children's literature. I guess, I could maybe go back to that. Who knows? Let's hope higher education is never outlawed though.

Dan Silverman: Well, can we talk a little bit about that? What's going on in Alaska with the budget?

Dave Dannenberg: Oh, let's see. Well, okay, in a very broad sense, just to give the listeners a quick overview. We had a new governor elected last year, came into power last December. As part of his first year annual budget, he rejected what our legislature, our legislators had appropriated for the university and used his power of veto to strike \$130 million basically out of the university's operating budget, and so because of that, then our board of regents declared fiscal exigency.

Dave Dannenberg: Then there were a series of backroom meetings and proposals and discussions and more meetings and more testimonies and more hearings and after about a month it finally lent itself to what the system is calling a compact agreement between our board of regents and the governor's office, that instead of the one year cut of \$135 million, it will be a sort of a glide path of a \$70 million cut over the next three years. So, that was good news in the sense that we knew we weren't going to have to drastically change like in just the few weeks ahead.

Dave Dannenberg: However, because of all that in the path the board of regents has asked our system-wide president to look at how the UA system of the university ... So we have a higher university system that has three separately accredited universities and then we have community campuses that would report to the universities because we do not have a community college system. So, at this point, we're sort of in the midst of that process of self-examination and determination of what the path forward is, knowing that we have \$70 million worth of cuts in the next three years ahead, knowing that the governor and some of the legislators would like us to be a single, singly accredited university with different campuses rather than three separate ones. So, as you can imagine, there's been lots of outcry, rage, disappointment, anger, outright rebellion, pretty much you could

describe any feeling. It's probably been felt at one point in time. So, that's where we are like overall.

Dave Dannenberg: At this very moment, really what's happening is two, three weeks ago we had the first set of meetings for our academic programs. Our administrative programs under the board of regents direction, they told the president he had authorization to, in his position, he could restructure those at any time. So, a lot of our administrative things like HR, finance, advancement, IT, those functions are right in the middle of being reorganized into a single structure rather than three separate or four separate ones, given the fact that we had the three universities and then the statewide office. The academic program reviews tentatively kicked off a few weeks ago for some initial discussions and it was during that same time that sort of these agreements were reached to know that we didn't have to do anything drastically this year. So, that that process has slowed down just a bit.

Dave Dannenberg: There is a board of regents meeting this week, actually tomorrow and Friday, to where it'll be discussed. But from what we understand, the president will still propose we move forward with those academic program reviews and the preliminary reports due to the board of regents in time for discussion and determination at their November meeting, and a determination at that point whether or not to continue pursuing a single university accredited structure. And the timeline if they agreed to do that, then the timeline for doing that moving forward. So, it's still a whole bunch up in the air at this point.

Dan Silverman: That's fascinating though and to be right in them in the middle of it, and we could probably do a series of podcasts just on that issue. But let's turn it over to talk a little bit about negotiated rulemaking. Cheryl, do you want to kickoff a question on that?

Cheryl Dowd: Sure. Dave was instrumental in keeping calm, I think, around the negotiated rulemaking table. I saw him. Yes, I was one of the people who listened through streaming and so there were a lot of emotions at that table and with Dave's good humor, I did notice that with the intelligent questions asked and the humor that he showed, it helped keep things calm at the table. But I am curious and he's laughing at me, but I'm curious-

Dave Dannenberg: I am laughing at you only because one, at the time I said, "The only thing worse than actually being in those meetings was probably trying to watch the live stream of them." But yeah, then also the fact that I'm glad I looked composed on camera.

Cheryl Dowd: You definitely did. The thing that I would ask you about in terms of structuring and you've talked a little bit with our SAN members a few times, I think on one of our coordinator meetings, but the negotiated rule making committee this year, the department did some unprecedented things. They created subcommittees. They provided proposed language to start with for the

negotiators to ... They left it open that it could be dismissed but that they did give language for you all to start with. And then voting in these packages instead of as a whole. Because consensus, as we all know, has to be 100% approval agreement around the table on all of the aspects that had been brought to the negotiated rulemaking. And there was such a large group. It was one of the largest, I think ever, I understand. And they broke it down into these voting packages. Buckets, they called them.

Dave Dannenberg: Buckets. Yes, I love that term.

Cheryl Dowd: So, what did you think of that and what would you recommend for the future? What did you like about it and what did you dislike about it?

Dave Dannenberg: Oh, what did I like?

Cheryl Dowd: Did it help you?

Dave Dannenberg: I would say, so there's probably more, there's a lot of more I would say, "Please don't ever do that again." You know, as you said, there were so many things on the table to be discussed. I don't think really in talking with my fellow negotiators, any of us actually thought we would come to consensus when we started the process. Just in the sense of there were so many different wide ranging issues that the fact that we would need to agree on each and every one of them across the board, I think we all recognize the fact that ... At one point were like, you know, "Why do we even bother?"

Dave Dannenberg: So, I mean, I was very happy to see the department break it down into those buckets. I would have preferred to see maybe five or six buckets rather than than the three. But, I understand from their perspective why they went with that. Timing wise, there are rules and processes that have to be followed but to originally allow only the three meetings for so many different topics was a grave concern that myself and a few other people started bringing up on day one.

Dave Dannenberg: So, we were very happy to finally hear in March that they, you know, or I guess February into March that they were agreeing and extended it into a fourth set of meetings in early April. So, I mean their openness and their sort of acceptance of some of those criticisms was a good thing. But yeah, on the whole way, way, way, way too many topics. I mean we did get through them, but I, you know, some were fairly easy because they were little minor changes in wording or we had something but the complexity of state authorization, obviously it was so big that we really didn't even get to deal with it, which is why we sort of almost went backwards with some of the definitions just because we ran out of time and the people around the table doing it, same with distance education. So yeah, that would be the one thing I would change. You either give us more time or limit the number of individual topics.

Cheryl Dowd: Well, you also were challenged by the weather. Several of your sessions either were canceled or started late due to weather in Washington. It does seem kind of odd to have something start in January in Washington given the fact that they are prone to cancel due to weather around there. They don't have a high threshold for tolerance of weather in Washington.

Dave Dannenberg: No, no. And, you know, and I knew that. I mean, having lived back East in Virginia, I recognize that. But yeah, it was to get there for the first set of meetings and I think we missed a day and a half there and then we missed a day in the second set of meetings because of weather it was, coming from Alaska it's just, even though I, I know that, that perspective, it was just kind of funny for me to go tell people, "Yeah, I came here and they're snowed out so I'm hanging out in a hotel for a few days." And, some people were able to, they lived at least regionally close enough to where they could go home or something. But yeah, that just wasn't going to happen for me. It did allow me to go hang out with family I had in the area. So, I got to go watch my five-year-old nephew's first ice skating lesson and took him and his three year old brother's sledding. So, I mean, I can't say I hated it, but.

Cheryl Dowd: It wasn't what you'd planned, that's for sure.

Dave Dannenberg: It wasn't what I had planned, exactly.

Cheryl Dowd: Yeah. Well, I appreciate just, you know, we're grateful to you and all the other negotiators that sat around that table for giving your thoughtful perspectives about that, because that was, it was a difficult task and you all rose to it and everyone's very appreciative of the efforts of the negotiators. That's for sure.

Dave Dannenberg: Well thank you. Strangely enough, I mean it was having never done it before, I did not really know what to expect and even actually when I volunteered myself to be nominated, I had no idea what I was getting into, but I thought it would be an interesting thing to be involved with. So, I was very happy to be selected and be a negotiator and I did, I mean, as challenging as the process was and as frustrating as it was, the collection of people and some of the leadership and knowledge we had was just, it was an amazing group of people to be able to spend time with. And I know lots of folks who have gone through that process and said, "Oh my gosh, I never want to do it again." And, I would do it again in a heartbeat. I don't know why. But I mean it's challenging, but at the same time it's kind of fun and interesting. That said, I would not want to watch the proceedings via the live stream. That sounds terrible.

Cheryl Dowd: It is interesting seeing rules get made. And so you know, what goes into it. And actually from my standpoint, I appreciated the conversations because it helps give context for what ultimately is decided. So, from that standpoint I thought it was very interesting. But certainly, there was back and forth between Dan and I and Russ and I, as we we're seeing and trying to understand and making sure we heard what we thought we heard and wanting to see how things would move

forward. So, it was interesting from our perspective too, even though it was live stream, so, we did okay.

Dave Dannenberg: Well, you know, if you're live streaming it like with a group of people? Yeah, I could see where it would be more interesting than ... Like my wife at one point said that she popped in just to kind of see what was going on and she was like, "Really that's what you're doing?" I said, "It's more interesting then it looks like from that." Right? But it was out [crosstalk 00:23:57]

Cheryl Dowd: To see what shirt you were wearing, if your tie matched, things like that.

Dave Dannenberg: Yeah, I probably should have worn a tie. I'm not a big tie wearer. People like dress up like the very first day and then we all quickly said, "Okay, let's do business casual for the rest of the time."

Cheryl Dowd: That was smart. Dan, do you have anything that you'd like to ask in terms of negotiated rulemaking?

Dan SIlverman: Well, I guess I have one quick question here to follow up and then we'll move on to the rest of our menu here. If I'm correct in remembering you were representing four year publics? Is that correct?

Dave Dannenberg: Yes, I was the primary representative for four year public institutions.

Dan SIlverman: How does that feel? Just given the diversity within institutions of that?

Dave Dannenberg: I let the power go to my head and demanded all kinds of things from schools around the country, as any great politician would do. It doesn't-

Dan SIlverman: You caught on quick, Dave.

Dave Dannenberg: Yeah, I did. No. To me that was honestly the hardest and most challenging part because as much as I felt like I was trying to reach out and talk to as many different people in different schools as I could, the public institution community is just so big and so broad and so diverse. I knew even the folks I was talking to was a drop in the bucket. So, I never did, I was never comfortable thinking of myself as speaking for that entire community even though I know that's the role I had to play. And which is fine and I did try to respect it and when it was time to come to an agreement or things that maybe I personally didn't agree with, I understand why on the bigger picture it was something that needed to be done and how it would benefit other members of the public institution, four-year public institution community.

Dave Dannenberg: But yeah, I was probably more worried about that than I was actually about the negotiation process itself. Because how do you, I mean we don't have way for me to or anybody to sort of collectively talk and hear back from that entire

community. I mean you can go through organizations and try to get people to send out things to list their [inaudible 00:26:59] and colleagues at other places and go through agencies and stuff like that. But even that you're waiting for other people to contact you rather than being able to contact everyone you might hope to speak with directly.

Dan Silverman: Yeah, it's an impossible task. But I just thought it was, interested to hear how you did gather feedback and fit into everything.

Dave Dannenberg: I mean I did enjoy the aspect of it in the sense that I've gotten to talk and meet with people at other institutions that I would've never known or heard of or learned about otherwise. So, I mean in that [crosstalk 00:27:46] it was kind of fun. I'm sorry?

Dan Silverman: But you didn't sell them any houses?

Dave Dannenberg: No, I didn't. I didn't sell them anything. And, I tried to, most strangely enough, most people didn't want to like tell me their opinions on things or have like a very strong stance. It was more so everybody just wanted to have, or least the folks I was talking to really just wanted to understand what was going on and how the process was working, more so than say, "Oh, make sure you get this thing changed about, you know, state authorization or 364(a)(II) needs to change and this is why," type of things. So, it wasn't as bad as I thought it could have been.

Dan Silverman: Well, great. Thank you so much Dave. And, we could go on just like a negotiated rulemaking, but we are going to switch over to our permanent fixture, back by popular necessity, Cheryl on Musicals.

Cheryl Dowd: Dave's staying on so he can add his two cents.

Dave Dannenberg: I am staying on and you know, I love, I can't sing at all, but I love music. So, depending on what you talk about, if I break into song in the background, just ignore me.

Cheryl Dowd: We'll, there you go.

Dan Silverman: Well, Dave, have you seen any musicals in the last year?

Dave Dannenberg: Never.

Dan Silverman: Never.

Dave Dannenberg: Never. But you have to think about where I am. How many musicals do you think come up to Anchorage?

- Cheryl Dowd: So the national tours of Broadway shows don't come to Alaska?
- Dave Dannenberg: I shouldn't say that. We do get like one a year that comes through.
- Cheryl Dowd: Wow.
- Dave Dannenberg: I don't know if they're ... I won't claim to say, and this is [inaudible 00:29:49] because I don't know. I won't say that they are like Broadway shows that are on the national thing, but they are, we've had like Wicked and Spamalot and-
- Cheryl Dowd: Well, there you go.
- Dave Dannenberg: But we've had some things come through. I think last spring, maybe like The Little Mermaid or something like that came through. So, we do get them from time to time, but it's a rare thing and there's not a lot of, even though I love music and my kids all played an instrument, my family isn't really a live music loving. So, to get them to actually agree to go with me to anything is rather difficult. But that's enough about me and musical stuff in Anchorage. I want to hear, I want to hear Cheryl's latest.
- Dan Silverman: Well, Cheryl I'm going to reflect on my vacation last month. I visited with an old coach, an old baseball coach of mine, who was recently had an interesting gig, which was he was hired by the producer of an off-Broadway musical called Toni Stone, which is about the first woman to play in the Negro Leagues. And, he was asked to coach the cast of this musical to make it look like they could play baseball. Fake it enough, you know, for a show. And he had some interesting stories to me about how he did that. But what have you seen in musicals that you've seen about where it was clear that actors had to learn something and did they pull it off?
- Cheryl Dowd: Absolutely. The authenticity is a very important part of a play or a musical. So they do, if there are special skills, there are skills training and skills support that will be provided. Much like there's support for ensuring that there's an authenticity for the costuming and the props that they use. So, you want something to look believable. So, they definitely have people involved in that. Even in regional theater with plays, you know, much like what you were talking about with baseball, my daughter was in a play at the St. Louis Repertory Theatre in St. Louis called The Wolves and it was about a girl soccer team. And so they did bring in a local college coach to help the girls because there's a amount of drills that they were doing onstage that was part of the play. And so, they worked and they went to a facility and trained with the coach. And I've heard other skills building, you know, skill-building in the area of like piano or painting. So, there are certainly different skills that they will get some support so that it looks authentic on stage.
- Dan Silverman: How did Cecily take to the soccer?

Cheryl Dowd: Well, she played soccer as a kid, so, that wasn't a problem. She knew what to do. So, as a matter of fact it was pretty, it was amusing because she told us after she had gotten the part that it was going to be a soccer based show and that she was juggling a soccer ball on stage and for during her tryout. And I said, "Well I guess, I guess those skills came in handy, you know from her years playing soccer." You know, gene pool, her dad and I had shared that experience with her early on. So anyway, so that worked out well.

Dave Dannenberg: Okay. So, I grew up playing soccer until my body is basically broken down and the doctors told me to stop. And Cheryl, you know, my daughter plays. So, I've been pretty involved in soccer. But the one thing I could never really do very well is juggle. But I can't even, I mean there's enough pressure just to juggle. But then to do it as part of your actual like audition?

Cheryl Dowd: No, she didn't tell me how many touches she got.

Dave Dannenberg: Okay. Well, she could have just like dropped it on her foot, said "Yeah, I can juggle [crosstalk 00:34:07]

Cheryl Dowd: I don't know. She didn't go that far to explain it. But anyway, she said that that had been part and they did have, you know, there were definite drills that they did on stage and it was really interesting because when you're doing it on a stage as opposed to having some grass to slow down the ball it definitely made for a need for some coordination on the girl's part to be able to do it. So anyway, it's an interesting play. If it comes to Alaska or anywhere else, different regional theaters and universities appear to have discovered the play. It seems to be going around these days because there are not that many plays that are just a full woman's cast. Young woman's cast especially. So, it's meant to be a bunch of 16 and 17 year old girls. So, it's an interesting, interesting play, if you see it.

Dan SIlverman: Well, all right.

Dave Dannenberg: I would go to see it.

Dan SIlverman: Sounds thought provoking, indeed. Well, thank you so much, Dave for joining us. Cheryl, thank you of course, as well. And thank you whoever you are out there listening. We hope you're enjoying this and we will see you next month with Alan Contreras. So, that's definitely going to be one to look forward to. And, normally don't know the guests prior to the end of the first podcast, but this time we do. So, give you guys something to enjoy. Thanks again, everybody.

Cheryl Dowd: Thanks Dan and thanks Dave. Appreciate you all. Take care

Dave Dannenberg: Thank you, both.